

The Tradition of Dande.

At the end of each year, we all celebrate 2 very special occasions, namely Christmas-day on which we wish each other peace accompanied by joy and New Years Day, full of optimism, good intentions and positive purposes for the year ahead.

The island of Aruba, since a few centuries, knows a musical tradition which is quite typical for Aruba and not to be found on the other islands in the Caribbean.

This unique tradition is called "Dande" (pronounced "danday"). The word "Dande" is probably derived from the spanish word "dandare", which means going from one place to the other.

During the tradition of "Dande", musicians visit the homes of the Aruban families, right after midnight, singing only one special song, in which they offer a serenade with the best wishes to each member of the family.

Certain lyrics of this song- in the local language of Papiamentu- are adapted to the place and the moment during which this theme is being presented, while the singer demonstrates his ability to improvise, while he **goes** along with his hat in which the people deposit a good-luck fee.

Considering the geographical limitations of Aruba, it is not excluded that this musical genre in its actual form and presentation, have not been evolutionized through the years, so it can be concluded that this is a pure traditional music-style.

It is quite interesting to mention that in the "Dande"-song, the choir sings "Añ-i nobe", which is not an existing word in the Papiamentu-language.

Oral-history say that "Añ-i nobe" was corrupted from the Spanish expression "Hay un año nuevo", meaning "a New Year is here".

The tradition of "Dande" goes on from New Years Eve until Epiphany (January 6th), on which Aruba celebrates another of its folcloric traditions, where costumed musicians give serenades

of religious songs, dressed up as kings (3) and the devil.

The instruments used during the "Dande" are the Cuatro (similar to the ukelele, with 4 strings), the Tambor (a drum, made out of a small wooden barrel with on both sides a spanned goat or sheep-skin), the -guitar, the Wiri (a metal rasp) and also the raspa(a rasp made out of the calabash-fruit)

The leading instrument during a "Dande"-presentation is usually the violin, *MARIMBA AND ACCORDION.*

This beautiful tradition almost got to a critical point some years ago, where you hardly heard of musicians passing with their "Dande"-serenade from home to home during New Years Day and the days to follow.

Nowadays, at years-end, a "dande-festival" is organized to choose the best "Dande"-singer, the most popular "Dande"-presentation and the best "Dande"-group, at which festival a few dozen folkloric groups participate.

As the lyric of a "Dande"-song goes;

" O Dande, a happy New Year to you all, Añ-i nobe".

For those who would like to try to interpret the song of this wonderful peace-loving tradition, ~~here~~ goes the lyrics and music.

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